

Michelle Romano's many milestones

1. Family Foundation

a. *Caring for the family* -

- i. As the oldest of 15 cousins, I grew up caring for the little ones. I enjoyed this role, and began to view myself as a caretaker from a very early age.

b. *My father* -

- i. I attended k-5 at Saint Mary's Hall, a small private school in San Antonio, TX. My dad also taught at the High School level here, so at the end of each day, all the "fac brats" would walk across campus to the upper school, where we would sit quietly in our parents classrooms as they taught. My dad's students adored him. He was fun, vibrant, passionate, clear, and incredibly smart. He won awards, and had the yearbook dedicated to him his very first year teaching there. He was a superhero in my eyes.
 1. "I want to teach calculus AB and BC, AP physics, and AP statistics at a small private school" - *Young Meesh*
- ii. When I was in second grade, my dad became an amputee. With him in-and-out of the hospital, I was grateful to feel a sense of stability and belonging in school...

2. A Place of Belonging

- a. With a whole lot of crazy going on at home, I was lucky to always find a place of belonging in schools...
- b. *Texas* - Saint Mary's Hall was a beautiful place. I connected with my teachers, and genuinely loved being at school.
- c. *New Jersey* - Peddie was a whole different ballgame. It was an intensely competitive boarding school with great athletics and a student body that was very well-off. Still, I found my closest friends in the world, formed very close bonds with teachers, and loved the community and all that the school had to offer. I discovered my passion for art, and quickly found my place within the arts department.
 - i. I loved the place so much, that when my dad left Peddie two years later to move to Los Angeles, my mom stayed back in NJ so I could finish my time at Peddie.

3. A Major in Psychology

- a. Came into college blind about what I wanted to major in. I knew I wanted to be a teacher, but didn't feel passionately about any one subject. I took some classes, and somehow found myself engrossed in Psychology.
- b. Since then, my studies in psychology have deeply affected my perspective on education and learning. Most notably, my senior thesis helped me to understand the necessary conditions for student engagement and ultimately student success. I have also connected with the material in child development, and believe that the early years are some of the most important years in fostering positive qualities both within school (curiosity and motivation), and outside of school (confidence and positive self-esteem).

4. **My Experiences Teaching**

- a. I find that each experience I have working with students only makes me more confident in my decision to work in schools. Each of my experiences has been so uniquely valuable to me:
 - i. *Exploration Summer Programs* - Here, I wrote the lesson plans for and taught both a painting and a film photography course for students going into 4th and 5th grade. Since it is a boarding summer enrichment program, I was also responsible for caring for a group of 10 girls on a residential hall. It was quite challenging, as I worked from 6am sometimes until past midnight, but I learned a great deal about myself and becoming a better educator. I learned from experienced educators who taught me how to practice patience, manage a classroom, and problem solve.
 - ii. *Child Development Center at JBFCS* - During my semester studying away in New York, I worked with children ages 3-5 who struggled with various developmental disorders and emotional disturbances. I learned how to cater to individuals with learning difficulties, and the processes associated with obtaining special education services.
 - iii. *BOCES and Sauquoit Valley Elementary* - understanding how to help students outside of the classroom.

5. **Fine-tuning: The road to self-awareness**

- a. I feel certain about my passion for working with young children in schools. It's now about fine-tuning my direction, and getting myself there!
- b. In this process of figuring out what I want, I have considered my own passions, my family's hopes for me, and other external pressures.
- c. On my journey to self-awareness and understanding, I realize that for the time being, I love being in the classroom working with students. I will pursue this for the time being, and once I've gained a bit more experience and learned more about myself, I'll reconsider my path... perhaps school counseling?